



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



Kitsap Farming & Food Systems 2024

THE ISSUE

The challenges facing farming and food systems in Kitsap County, such as land use and development, economic viability, environmental concerns, market access and labor shortages, all threaten the sustainability of local agriculture and the economic stability of small farms. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring long-term food security and promoting environmentally friendly farming practices in the county.

Since 2015, WSU Kitsap Extension has actively taken part in building a community food system by supporting emerging coalitions, networks and other projects based around the needs of the community and its partners. A community food system is one in which food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are geographically integrated and benefit the environment, economy, and social and nutritional health of a particular community. In 2024, Kitsap saw a continued need for partnership building and a more collaborative approach to food systems work across the county and the region.

THE RESPONSE

In 2024, WSU Kitsap Extension maintained a whole systems approach to farming and community food systems. The Farming & Food System program continued partnerships around health equity, food access, farmers markets, farmer education, food preservation, and capacity building. Key projects included supporting farmers markets with food access programs, aiding Kitsap Harvest, delivering farmer educational classes and technical assistance through the Regional Small Farms and Kitsap Farm Mentor programs, provided food preservation resources and supported various coalitions like the Kitsap Agritourism Coalition and the Kitsap Food Systems Round Table.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 10 farmers markets supported with food access programming in Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, and Grays Harbor counties.
- 19 farmers markets and farm stands supported with SNAP Market Match technical assistance across 9 Counties.
- Kitsap Harvest supported to provide 88,133 lbs. of fresh and donated foods to 44 locations across the county.
- One-on-one technical assistance provided to 17 Kitsap farms.
- 10 virtual classes, 11 in-person farm walks and 4 additional agricultural topic based in-person classes provided to 157 Kitsap farmer participants.
- 8 farm mentors supported in providing a total of 8 educational group classes to 12 farm interns.
- Support provided to 1 county-wide food systems network, 2 farmer coalitions, and 1 agricultural nonprofit.





THE IMPACTS

FOOD ACCESS PROGRAMMING & FARMERS MARKETS

- **Farmers Markets:** Direct support to 17 farmers markets and 2 farm stands with food access programming in Western Washington. Overall increased dollars spent at Western Washington farmers markets and direct market farms via the SNAP Market Match incentive program.
- **Kitsap Harvest:** WSU Kitsap continued to provide staffing, materials, and resources to assist Kitsap Harvest's mission in diverting food that would normally go to waste to those in need in the community. In 2024, the organization distributed a total of 88,133 pounds of food to 44 locations. 2,108 pounds of food were diverted to partners for processing ready to eat meals and 1,545 pounds of food was provided as animal feed that would have otherwise gone to the waste stream.

FARMER SUPPORT

Working with farmers and other community partners is essential in building a more localized food system in our region. WSU Kitsap Extension has continued to support farmers through the following projects and programs in 2024:

- **Regional Small Farms** (*See 2024 Regional Small Farms Impact Report for full regional impact*):
 - 17 Kitsap farmers provided one-on-one technical assistance. Farmers additionally had access to regional staff specializing in integrated pest management, food safety, composting, agritourism, marketing and business.
 - 25 educational classes and in person farm walk events provided to 157 Kitsap farmer participants.
 - Seven (7) Kitsap Farms participated in the second year of a three (3) year Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant to conduct sweetpotato trials in the region.
- **Kitsap Farm Mentor program** (*See the 2024 Kitsap Farm Mentor Program Impact Report*):
 - Support to 8 approved farm mentors across 7 farms in Kitsap.
 - Conducted 8 group classes delivered to 12 interns with instruction in: body mechanics; farm efficiency; pasture & hay management, integrated pest management, growing flowers, business planning, composting models, and crop planning.

FOOD PRESERVATION & SAFETY

In 2024, WSU Kitsap provided staffing for community food preservation and safety.

- The community had access to a calibrated pressure testing gauge. A total of 24 pressure canners tested.
- New webpage was developed to support food safety and preservation resources.
- 3 (three) Use Food Well Classes were delivered to 14 individuals providing education on food safety, using food well, and diverting useable food from the waste stream.



THE IMPACTS *continued*

CAPACITY BUILDING, COALITIONS & NETWORKS

- **Kitsap Agritourism Coalition:** Administrative and facilitation support provided to the Kitsap Agritourism Coalition (KAC) group of farmers. The group now encompasses over 30 local farms meeting monthly to support each other and advance agritourism initiatives in Kitsap County. WSU Kitsap Extension continued to provide the group coordination, planning, resources, and support in presenting the second annual Kitsap Farm Tour, which took place on August 11th, 2024, and included eleven (11) Kitsap host farm sites.
- **Kitsap Food Systems Round Table:** Continued support of monthly meetings for ten local partner organizations to connect and share out resources. In addition to ongoing meeting support, WSU Kitsap applied and was awarded a USDA Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grant for a collective planning project. The project will assess the current state of local food distribution in the county, identify gaps, and provided recommendations to the group around opportunities moving towards a more economically efficient local food distribution system. The planning project is expected to wrap up with a full report to the round table in early 2025.
- **Kitsap Farmland Preservation Coalition:** WSU Kitsap continued support to this group of farmers and partners in the form of administrative assistance and meeting facilitation. The group is now led by farm partners and includes agriculture resource providers and farm representatives from across the county.
- **Kitsap Community & Agricultural Alliance (KCAA):** WSU Kitsap was able to continue assisting the nonprofit through advising and support under a board advisory role. Additionally, WSU Kitsap applied and was awarded a Food for Climate Solutions Grant, through the Russell Family Foundation, to work with the organization in 2024 to deliver 5 (five) educational and social networking opportunities for farmers in Kitsap County.

***WSU Kitsap Extension works to
build the capacity of
individuals, organizations,
businesses, and communities,
empowering them to find solutions
for local issues and to improve
their quality of life.***
